



Department of Music
University of Alberta

Michelle Marie Santiago,
piano



Arts Building
University of Alberta

Friday, March 22, 2002
5:00 p.m.

One might think that because the piano was designed to be played with two hands, there would be a scarcity of works for the left hand alone. On the contrary, the literature is great and varied in style. It is, however, largely unplayed. Composers wrote these works as either etudes to develop the often neglected left hand or for specific performers who had lost the use of their right hands. Obstacles that composers must overcome when writing for one hand include issues of sonority, texture, and pianism. Distinctive challenges for the performer are balance of sound and physical considerations such as endurance.

Of a set of 5 arrangements of well-known works intended by Brahms to be used as technical studies, the fifth is the longest and most musically satisfying. It is based on the famous Chaconne from the Partita No. 2 in D minor for solo violin by Bach and unlike other transcriptions of the piece, Brahms's writing remains faithful to the original. He wrote it for the left hand alone to approximate the sonority of a solo violin as closely as possible.

Camille St.-Saëns's duo piano partner, Caroline de Serres had her right hand operated on in 1912. Upon her request, St.-Saëns composed a set of studies for the left hand alone. Robert Casadesus tells a different story. He believed that the Etudes were given by St.-Saëns to his teacher and St.-Saëns's good friend Louis Diémer for use by his best students. Diémer, in turn, assigned Casadesus the Bourrée, considered the best piece of the set. In Op. 135, St.-Saëns returns to old dance forms inspired by his lifelong interest in the works of Couperin and Rameau.

Perhaps because of the pressure of being in a Moscow Conservatory class (1891) that included Rachmaninov, Josef Hoffmann and Josef Lhevinne, Scriabin temporarily lost the full use of his right hand from over-practicing. Despite this setback Scriabin was intent in continuing to play. He composed the Prelude and Nocturne for the left hand, Op. 9. Unlike the prelude, which is often grouped with Scriabin's other preludes, the nocturne is rarely performed.

Frank Bridge, a prolific composer and conductor, is more known today as the teacher of Benjamin Britten than for his music. A lifelong pacifist, Bridge was in utter despair at the time of the Great War. Written for Douglas A. G. Fox, a pianist who lost his right arm in the war, these 3 Improvisations for the piano perhaps take a nostalgic look at a lost world of pastoral beauty and tranquility.

Keep at Least One of Yer Filthy Hands Where I Kin See It (in 7 movements) for the left hand of a pianist is a veritable smorgasbord of often unrelated ideas infused with a generous amount of absurdity; the composer built it largely with exposed single lines. The first movement is a distorted fanfare (which serves as an aural "Here we go" and as a mini-warm-up for the performer). II explores the major second (sol-la) that defines I's final chord; it is made up of short 'noodlings' - isolated fragments that fail to develop. III consists of a single, unmeasured melodic line that is introduced in a narrow register before being scattered through the piano's range. Further noodlings (this time, variations on the short-short-short-long rhythmic motive) comprise IV; it is the ... cell that ushers in V, the longest and most technically challenging movement of the work. V is essentially a study. The pianist suffers a brief breakdown in VI (perhaps because of the technical challenges of V, the failure of the work as a whole to GO ANYWHERE, or the pianist's own mental instability) before regaining composure and playing VII, a rather subdued and unassuming (but still mildly disturbed) little blues item that closes the work.

Programme

1. Studies for piano, Anh. 1a/1 No. 5
Chaconne, after Bach Partita No. 2 in D minor,
for the left hand (1869) J. Brahms
(1833 – 1897)
2. Six Études pour la main gauche seule,
Op. 135 (1912) C. Saint-Saëns
(1835 – 1921)
 - No. 1 Prélude: Allegretto moderato
 - No. 2 Alla fuga: Allegro non troppo
 - No. 3 Moto perpetuo: Allegretto – doux et
tranquille
 - No. 4 Bourrée: Molto allegro
 - No. 5 Elégie: Poco adagio
 - No. 6 Gigue: Presto

Intermission

3. Two Pieces for the left hand, Op. 9 (1894) A. Scriabin
(1872 – 1915)
 - No. 1 Prelude
 - No. 2 Nocturne
4. Three Improvisations for piano
left hand (1917) F. Bridge
(1879 – 1941)
 - No. 1 At Dawn
 - No. 2 A Vigil
 - No. 3 A Revel
5. Keep At Least One of Yer Filthy
Hands Where I Kin See It (in 7 movements)
for the left hand of a pianist (2002) Christian Bérubé
 - Uno
 - Deux
 - Drei
 - Cuatro
 - Five
 - [høk]
 - cim

Michelle Marie Santiago

Michelle Marie Santiago was born in Edmonton in 1982 and began her music studies at the Alberta College Conservatory of Music (Early Childhood Program) in 1984. She was accepted into the piano studio of Dr. Ernesto Lejano in 1993. Michelle received her ARCT Diploma (Performer) in piano from the Royal Conservatory (Toronto) in 1998. Currently she studies with Dr. Jacques Després at the University of Alberta and with John Perry at the Aspen Music Festival and School. She also had the privilege of working with Dr. Joachim Segger, Jean-David Coen and Antoinette Perry.

Michelle won the University Symphony Orchestra Concerto Competition in 1999 and was the featured soloist at Music Makers II at the Winspear Centre for Music where she performed Chopin's Concerto No. 2 in F minor. Michelle is also a prizewinner of Edmonton Kiwanis and Alberta Provincial Music Festivals and the ARMTA/AMEF Provincial and CFMTA National Piano Competitions.

Michelle has appeared in various recitals and performances at the Francis Winspear Centre for Music, Eckhardt-Gramatte Hall in Calgary, Alberta Government House, Edmonton City Hall, Alberta College Muttart Hall, Grande Prairie Regional College Performing Arts Recital Hall, the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. and at Kilburn and Eastman Halls in Rochester, N.Y.

Michelle is a recipient of numerous scholarships including Beryl Barns Memorial Undergraduate Awards, a William and Mary Hawrysh Memorial Leadership Scholarship, Universiade '83 scholarships, a Faculty of Arts Achievement Award, Bessie Brooks Winspear Scholarships, Peace River Pioneer Memorial Scholarships in Music, Tommy Banks and Marek Jablonski Awards, Jason Lang, Louise McKinney, Alexander Rutherford academic scholarships and Aspen Music School scholarships.

Michelle is a member of the Golden Key National Honor Society and the president of the U of A Music Students Association.

Acknowledgments

Department of Music, University of Alberta

Dr. Jacques Després

Alfred and Maria Fung

Eunice and Sherwood Shankland

Winfield Miclat

Christian Bérubé

A reception at the Arts Lounge follows immediately after the recital.